

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

October 21, 2013

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY JAY CARNEY

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

12:50 P.M. EDT

Q The French government is pretty angry today after Le Monde claimed that the NSA has secretly monitored tens of millions of phones, communications in France earlier this year. Prime Minister Ayrault said that he is shocked and has demanded an explanation. So I guess the question is what kind of explanation is the U.S. ready to give to yet another concern by this alleged behavior?

MR. CARNEY: Well, I would say a couple of things. One, obviously we have an enormously important and valuable relationship between the United States and France, one of our closest allies and certainly our longest ally. And as we've said before in response to questions about other countries, we address issues like this related to alleged intelligence activities through diplomatic channels, and that would certainly be the case here. I'm not going to comment publicly on every specified, alleged intelligence activity. And as a matter of policy, we have made clear that the United States gathers foreign intelligence of the type gathered by all nations.

As the President said in his speech at the U.N. General Assembly, we've begun to review the way that we gather intelligence so that we properly balance the legitimate security concerns of our citizens and allies with the privacy concerns that all people share.

I would remind you that the National Security Agency is a foreign intelligence agency. It is focused on discovering and developing information about valid foreign intelligence targets. Its activities are directed against these valid foreign intelligence targets in response to requirements from U.S. leaders in order to protect the nation and its interests from threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Thank you all very much. Have a great day.